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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 002189

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE - CHRIS HOH

E.O. 12356: DECL: 6/7/05

TAGS:

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL-INFORMAL NO. 7

¶1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

¶2. SAKIC RUMOR: (FOR CHRIS HOH FROM RICK HOLTZAPPLE) I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO REACH CICAK TO SEE WHAT HE HAS HEARD, BUT I ASKED SLAVKO GOLDSTEIN (A MEMBER OF THE CROATIAN HELSINKI COMMITTEE'S BOARD, A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF CICAK, AND A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE ZAGREB JEWISH COMMUNITY) IF HE HAD HEARD ANY RUMORS THAT SAKIC HAD SURFACED IN CROATIA. GOLDSTEIN SAID HE HAD NOT HEARD ANY SUCH RUMORS, AND WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE HEARD THEM IF THEY WERE CIRCULATING IN ZAGREB. (NOTE: IF CICAK WERE SPREADING THESE RUMORS, GOLDSTEIN WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE HEARD THEM.)

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¶3. GOLDSTEIN, AND OTHERS I ASKED WHO FOLLOW THE PRESS CLOSELY, RECALLED THAT SAKIC GAVE AN INTERVIEW IN BUENOS AIRES TO A LOCAL JOURNALIST WHO ACCOMPANIED TUDJMAN ON HIS TRIP TO ARGENTINA A FEW MONTHS BACK. (I GATHER SAKIC IS NOT EXACTLY IN HIDING IN ARGENTINA; HE CLAIMS HE HAS POWERFUL FRIENDS IN THE ARMY AND LEGISLATURE.) IN THAT INTERVIEW, SAKIC SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO VISIT CROATIA, BUT THAT HE KNEW IT WOULD BE AN IMPOLITIC THING TO DO, BECAUSE OF HIS PAST. BUT SAKIC SAID, "I HOPE THAT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT YEAR I WILL BE ABLE TO COME AND STAY. WE WILL SEE." GOLDSTEIN SAID HE ALSO VAGUELY RECALLED A SUBSEQUENT PRESS REPORT OF AN (UNCONFIRMED) COMMENT BY CROATIAN HEALTH MINISTER HEBRANG THAT THERE WAS NO REASON SAKIC SHOULD NOT TRAVEL TO CROATIA, SINCE HE HAD NEVER BEEN CONVICTED OF WAR CRIMES. BUT GOLDSTEIN SAID THAT THIS COMMENT WAS AN UNOFFICIAL STATEMENT, AND HE WAS NOT EVEN SURE HEBRANG HAD REALLY SAID IT. (NOTE: HEBRANG'S FATHER, A LEADING PARTISAN, WAS PART OF A PRISONER EXCHANGE ORGANIZED BY SAKIC IN WWII.)

¶4. OUR FBIS FSN ALSO TOLD ME THAT HE THOUGHT TANJUG HAD RECENTLY REPORTED THAT SAKIC HAD COME TO ZAGREB. POSSIBLY THAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE RUMOR THAT SAKIC HAS NOW COME TO ZAGREB.

¶5. BY THE WAY, IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE COMMANDANT OF JASENOVAC WAS A MAN NAMED MAX LUBURIC (WHOSE SISTER IS MARRIED TO SAKIC), AND SAKIC WAS THE CAMP'S DEPUTY COMMANDER (AND CHIEF EXECUTIONER).

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